OPINION

BY F.S. AIJAZUDDIN

The Don-roe doctrine

POLITICAL doctrines, like public buildings, are often named after persons. The US boasts the Lincoln Memorial, the J. Edgar Hoover Building, even Washington, D.C. America's very name owes its origins to the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Had the cartographer Martin Waldseem ller not appropriated the name America for his map of the New World in 1507, America might have been named Colombia, after Christopher Columbus.

Political doctrines too have a patrimony: in the East, Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism and Brezhnevism. The latter declared the then USSR's obligation under the Warsaw Pact to intervene militarily if any Eastern Bloc socialist country was threatened. China has seen Taoism, Maoism and more recently Xi-ism. Xi-ism has morphed from 'Xi Jinping Thought', formally incorporated in the constitution of the Chinese Communist Party in 2018. Xi Jinping Thought has been summarised to include Ten Affirmations, Fourteen Commitments, Thirteen Areas of Achievements, and Six Musts. Collectively, they encapsulate Xi Jinping's worldview and the Sinicisation of Marxism.

Xi Jinping has chosen to follow the footsteps of his precursors. In the west, President Donald Trump has hurdled over the doctrines left by his predecessors — in particular, Dwight Eisenhower's of 1957, which assured economic aid and military assistance to any Middle Eastern countries threatened by 'international communism'. And Richard Nixon's in 1959, which affirmed that the US would honour "treaty commitments" but expected its allies to be responsible for their own defence. It would provide arms and aid but not troops.

Trump has backtracked centuries to Theodore Roosevelt's doctrine of 1904 and James Monroe's of 1823. Roosevelt's doctrine identified Latin America as its backyard, where the US could expand its commercial interests and block European hegemony in the region. It sought to make the US the dominant power there. Monroe warned European powers like Spain against colonising the Americas further.

The impact of the Monroe Doctrine on US foreign policy has been discussed in Jay Sexton's *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America*. He traces the growth of *these* United States (the original 13 states) to *the* United States. He explores their ambivalent relationship with an expansive 19th-century Great Britain, and describes the Monroe Doctrine as "an American shorthand for a hemisphere (and ultimately a world), cleared of the British Empire".

Two centuries later, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 has been refurbished and reframed as the 'Don-roe doctrine'. Today, Trump's America has nothing to fear from King Charles III's Britain. Trump's slogan 'Make America Great Again' is more than a doctrinal goal. It is a combustible propellant that admixes "right-wing populism, right-wing anti-globalism, national conservatism and neo-nationalism".

His policy is a forceful application of 'dollar diplomacy', used many times before in US history — instances are when the US bought Louisiana from France in 1803, Florida from Spain in 1819, Alaska from Russia in 1867, and the US Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917.

The Danes having sold the Virgin Islands should prepare themselves for the 'forced sale' of Greenland. They may not have a choice. The contiguous US mainland is almost four times bigger than Greenland which is 50 times larger than Denmark. A Great Dane is no match for a hungry Rottweiler.

Trump's demands evoke fears expressed over a century ago by small nations when threatened by larger ones. Hispanics in particular became apprehensive. As one Argentine put it, by substituting the United States for Europe as "a source of civilisation", they would be getting "European civilisation second hand".

> A Great Dane is no match for a hungry Rottweiler.

This in essence is the unease felt by many in our modern world. There are over 190 sovereign states, each with its own flag, individual aspirations, and unique identity. They view modern Xi-ism with its One Road, One Belt universalism and Trumpism with its insidious tariff ultimatums through the same lens. They fear being treated by both superpowers as 'politically free' but also as 'commercial slaves'.

These concerns are sharpened by the reality that China and the US share a sinister characteristic: Xi is leader for life; Trump for a finite term, ending whenever. At their apex, both superpowers have become what John Quincy Adams (who helped draft the Monroe Doctrine) warned against — 'a military monarchy'.

Some will recall the Five Principles (*Panchsheel*) agreed between China and India in 1954, and echoed in the I.K. Gujral Doctrine of 1996. They spoke inter alia of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, and peaceful coexistence. Sadly, "the past", in L.P. Hartley's words, "is a foreign country". They did things differently there. ■

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BY RIDA TAHIR

Road to safety

HOME is often described as a sanctuary for safety and comfort, but for countless victims of domestic violence (DV), it becomes the very place where danger exists.

After much effort, a progressive law was passed in Sindh in 2013 to protect DV victims and survivors. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013, (DV Act, 2013) defines 'domestic violence' as physical violence, emotional, psychological, verbal, sexual and economic abuse, stalking and trespass. Following Sindh, the other provinces also passed DV laws including: The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014, The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2021. The Islamabad Capital Territory lacks an explicit law, but recently a bill has been presented in parliament.

The effectiveness of legislation addressing violence against women and girls is rarely evident at the time it is enacted. The real impact becomes clear only when they are put into practice. It is through enforcement and real-life application that legal principles confront the realities of human behaviour. When laws move from written statutes to courts, police stations and communities, the ideals of justice confront the social norms, power imbalances and lived realities that shape women's and girls' experiences of gender-based violence (GBV).

A recent case in Karachi reveals a gap in DV and gender protection laws in the country. A judgement by an additional district and sessions judge highlighted that Pakistan's law does not address cases where DV by a husband or in-laws lead a woman to take her own life, an offence known as the 'abetment of suicide'. The case was registered by the brother of the victim, a 32-year-old woman, who reportedly died by suicide, leaving a note that held her husband and in-laws responsible.

Until 2022, attempted suicide was a criminal offence in Pakistan. This changed with the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2022, which decriminalised suicide attempts. However, the absence of a specific law addressing abetment of suicide in DV cases remains a serious gap — particularly in GBV cases, where prolonged abuse or coercion may push victims towards self-harm. For example, in India, Section 108 of its new criminal code — *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* — can apply in cases where DV results in suicide. It is a cognisable, non-bailable, non-compoundable offence.

To criminalise abetment of suicide in Pakistan, one option would be for parliament to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, by introducing a new offence specifically addressing the abetment of suicide. Alternatively, each provincial assembly could amend its DV and women protection laws to include such abetment as an offence. Both approaches would require careful consultation with police, civil society, prosecution and judicial academies, which can be led by the National Commission on the Status of Women.

Further, while the definition of domestic violence in DV Act, 2013, may seem to capture all forms of DV, over time, the offence of DV has evolved significantly. The recent increase in cases of technology-facilitated GBV is a prime example. Tech advancements have enabled new forms of domestic abuse, such as misuse of GPS-enabled devices — including smartphones and smartwatches — to track a victim's movements.

Dowry-related violence is another form of DV which is not explicitly mentioned in DV Act, 2013. The Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act, 1976, continues to apply across Pakistan. Section 8A provides that complaints against violations of the dowry law should be made to the deputy commissioner. The law provides that the offence will only be triable by a 'family court. However, Section 9 (3) makes it clear that the family court cannot take cognisance except upon a complaint in writing made by, or under the authority of, the DC. This is in contradiction to DV Act, 2013, which allows an aggrieved person to directly file a petition in court, thereby increasing access to justice. Data, compiled by the National Police Bureau and recently presented in the National Assembly, reveals that about 9,799 women experienced DV between 2021 and 2024. However, this data is underreported. Further, DV crimes that are not explicitly recognised as offences under the law can remain invisible in official statistics, further masking the true scale of the crisis.

> Impact of DV laws becomes clear only when they are implemented.

Everyone deserves to live in a home where there is safety, security, and dignity. Laws must evolve with society, and be continuously updated to guarantee safety and protection. The state must strengthen DV laws and ensure that no one lives in fear in their own home. ■

The writer is a barrister of Lincoln's Inn and an advocate of the high courts of Pakistan.

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1976 | Fifty years ago

'No piecemeal elections'

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Education and Provincial Coordination, Mr. Abdul Hafiz Pirzada, said here today [Jan 14] the allegation that the Government has been considering to hold piecemeal elections is totally incorrect. He was asked to comment on a statement made by Prof. Ghafoor Ahmad, parliamentary leader of the Jamaat-i-Islami group in the National Assembly and General Secretary of the United Democratic Front. ...

He, however, said that such a step does not in any manner violate the spirit and letter of the Constitution ... because the Prime Minister has the prerogative to have the National Assembly dissolved at any time and in that event the Constitution requires that fresh election to the National Assembly be held in 90 days. This is a constitutional obligation and the Chief Election Commissioner has no alternative. Should the National Assembly be dissolved prematurely, there is no corresponding obligation on the provincial Chief Ministers to have their provincial Assemblies dissolved. In that event ... the elections to the provincial Assemblies and the National Assembly cannot be held at the same time... . — News agencies

1951 | Seventy-five years ago

Daultana optimistic

LAHORE: The recent swing of public opinion in favour of the Muslim League was reflected at a well-attended gathering of Lahore citizens addressed by Mian Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana. The colourful meeting took place in the heart of Mochi Gate, popularly regarded as the strong citadel of anti-League forces in the Punjab.

"Anybody opposing the Muslim League", said speaker after speaker, "will have to forfeit his or her security." It is interesting to recall that the challenge of the supporters of the Khan of Mamdot was that no meeting under the auspices of the Muslim League can be allowed to be held inside or outside the Mochi Gate.

Addressing his 22nd corner-street meeting in Lahore, Mian Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Daultana said: "The Muslim League is determined to bag every one of the urban seats in the Punjab to prove to the word at large once again that the educated and politically conscious people of the province are solidly united behind the Pakistan Prime Minister in defending the freedom of Pakistan and winning for the four million people of Jammu and Kashmir the right of deciding their own future under a free and unfettered plebiscite." — Special representative

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.

Islamophobia surely rising across India

THIS is with reference to the report 'Calls for Bihar CM to quit after he unveils Muslim woman' (Dec 17). India may claim to be the so-called 'largest democracy' in the world, or even may go on calling itself the 'hub of technology and economic growth', but reality on the ground mirrors the true face of Indian politics.

It reminds one of the famous saying: 'The great threat to humanity is not war, but indifference.' It rightly fits into the behaviour that was intentionally directed at disrespecting a Muslim woman without scant regard for religious, social and moral codes of honour.

Just because Nitish Kumar is the chief minister does not mean he is entitled to behave immorally, violating the dignity of women. Although he may have been seen behaving awkwardly before, his biases on communal and religious lines are evident.

What can be more evident than this incident to prove that Indian Muslims are not tolerated in India, and the inhumane treatment of the community is a recurring feature of Hindutva mentality?

The current Indian government has a long-cherished dream of establishing a Hindu state based on Hindutva ideology, which is opposed to pluralism, mutual coexistence and communal harmony. The Hindu dominance in politics has left the minority communities shattered and suppressed. No words can describe the emotions that the victim must have felt.

The incident is a clear proof that Indian politicians are not properly educated, and their indecent attitudes and behaviours speak volumes about their indifference to the sentiments of the various minority communities.

What Kumar did was an expression of Indian politicians' real attitudes and feelings towards Muslims. This is simply hatred towards Islam and Muslims. This is pure Islamophobia. We have seen such Hindutva hatred towards Muslims for years. What is really alarming is that this politician has been elected chief minister several times. One wonders how he is capable of running state affairs with such a bigoted mentality. The incident should awaken the conscience of every liberal person who sees women empowerment as strength and the suppression of women's right to dignity as the weakness of state.

India may be an 'Asian giant' with considerable economic, technological and diplomatic clout, but, internally, it is really in a rotten and crumbling state.

Abdul Qadeer Seelro
Larkana

Tests and scans

PHYSICIANS are the ones who provide a ray of hope to the ailing, but that is what the theory says. In practical terms, the role of physicians has become controversial with the passage of time. It is a fact that we have a burgeoning population, and the physician-people ratio is 0.83 per 1,000, which is far below what has been officially recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

But more than the quantitative part of the equation, it is the quality of healthcare provided that must be accorded a critical value. Our physicians, frankly speaking, treat patients in an unprofessional manner due to which the quality of care stands compromised.

In the good old days, physicians used to focus on psychological and clinical examination of patients, but, with the passage of time, they have gradually become more and more reliant on tests and scans. There are various reasons behind this 'fascination' with tests and scans that are cited frequently in public discourse. Regardless of the reason, however, this tendency means a massive spike in the cost of healthcare. Responsible behaviour is a core element, and healthcare professionals in Pakistan do leave a lot to be desired in this critical component.

Mian Kasteer Kakakhel
Nowshera

PSER survey

PEOPLE across Punjab suffer on account of a high inflation rate, corruption, and a wide disparity between the poor and the rich. According to a survey report, the poverty rate in southern Punjab is higher than that in central and northern Punjab.

The Punjab government launched the Punjab Socio-Economic Registry (PSER) survey to understand the socioeconomic conditions of the people so that appropriate steps could be taken to benefit those who are the most vulnerable and living below the poverty line. For this purpose, 22,000 field staff are actively conducting the door-to-door survey. Teachers have also been deployed as enumerators, alongside other staff, to ensure transparency, accuracy and effective targeting.

As such, people often hesitate to provide information because the survey advertisement was not publicised adequately. They respond only considering that a government teacher is asking for necessary details. Additionally, many fear that levies may be imposed, leading them to withhold accurate information about their assets, which undermines transparency.

It is vital to inform the public that this survey is useful, and that the data would be used for the welfare of Punjab through various schemes, including income-support programmes, health insurance, scholarships and skill-development initiatives. The PSER enables a one-window social protection system that instantly checks eligibility for multiple programmes.

While the data collected by teachers is generally trustworthy, it ultimately depends on the accuracy of the information provided by the families. To ensure transparency, the data should be cross-checked with various government agencies.

Muhammad Iqbal Awan
Mianwali

Contaminated water

WHILE Karak is believed to be producing uranium, the government does not have any testing facilities to test the uranium level in drinking water that is supplied to the locals. This is a serious gap in public health infrastructure.

Citizens of the area have no idea whether the water is safe or unsafe for drinking purposes. The rising number of cancer patients in the area, however, is making people worried, and rightly so. From blood and bone cancers to kidney failure, there are several diseases that have become common and are linked to counsumption of contaminated drinking water.

The people of Karak have the right to have healthcare centres with chemotherapy facilities. Currently, the closest to them are a few facilities in Bannu, which is more than 50km away. People affected by cancer are facing problems travelling long distances for their treatment.

There is no filtration system in the affected areas. There is an urgent requirement for filtration plants because the residents have no other option except drinking unsafe and untreated water. Drinking clean water is the basic right of Karak residents.

Federal and provincial governments need to take quick action, provide adequate treatment facilities in the area, and order water testing without any further delay.

Arbab Ur Rehman
Karak

A party of feudals?

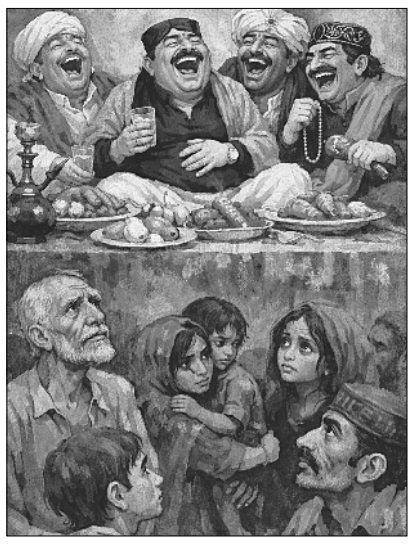
THIS is with reference to the letter 'A govt initiative thaty went utterly wrong' (Jan 13) about how things went from bad to worse at a khuli kachehri in Sujawal. Such grievance sessions are said to be underway across the province as part of an initiative by the Sindh government.

Generally speaking, officials from police and local administration often attend such events where ordinary folks queue up to air complaints of corruption or harassment. However, the real power-holders — the feudal and tribal elders of the area —skip these forums altogether.

Despite their absence, however, every now and then reports trickle in of veiled threats, like a farmer beaten up for demanding irrigation rights, or a shopkeeper warned after raising the matter of irregularities. Village headmen whisper that those who speak 'too loudly' get their water cut off or their cattle go 'mysteriously' missing. This is intimidation dressed as outreach, not participation at all.

When the elite stage accountability theatre, but punish the actors for stepping out of script, democracy hollows out. Those who ordered such public hearings should either pull the right strings, or drop the curtain down on this puppet show.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had thundered that



feudalism was dead, and had promised equality and fairness. Can his party, which has been at the helm of provincial affairs for a very long time, tell us how are public representatives supposedly the voice of the electorate when they are still strutting as feudal lords?

The provincial government must rein in these self-styled lords, or admit that the party can offer to the people nothing but a prettier cage. We, the common folk, are not asking for handouts; we want the stage cleared of these masked goons.

Ume Rubab Chandio
Dadu

▶ **POPULATION FIGURE:** This is with reference to the report 'Pakistan to enter 2026 as fifth-most populous country' (Dec 31). The population figure quoted in the report is more than 225 million. As per the digital population census 2023, conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the country's population is 241.5 million, which, today, may actually stand at more than 250 million.
Dr Muhammad Afzal
Islamabad

▶ **EXAM STRESS:** Examinations have become a source of constant stress and fear for most students, forcing them to study for long hours, compromise their sleep, and face the pressure of high expectations. Many students struggle with anxiety and self-doubt, but do not talk about it. Unfortunately, most educational institutions focus only on results and grades, while the emotional wellbeing of the students is ignored. There is very limited counselling support available in universities, and students are rarely guided on how to manage stress in a healthy way. This pressure not only affects academic performance, but also damages confidence and motivation. Educational institutions should provide the much-needed counselling services.
Faiqa Kundi
Islamabad

▶ **TRANSFER OF FEE:** I took admission in a two-year Law programme at the University Law College, Quetta, which is affiliated with the University of Balochistan. I hold a scholarship from the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The HEC issued the relevant cheque in the name of the University of Balochistan instead of the college. Through an application, I requested the university administration to transfer my fee to the college, but three months have passed and my application has still not been processed despite multiple requests. Meanwhile, the college has refused to recommend my name for the government's laptop scheme due to non-submission of the fee. It is the responsibility of both these public institutions to resolve the matter on an urgent basis.
Sherzaman Musakhail
Quetta

External Ombudsman

Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiqi is *Dawn's* External Ombudsman (DEO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. DEO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is DEO who takes notice of any alleged violations of *Dawn's* code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action.
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